

REMARKS

Claim Rejections

Claims 1-4 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being rendered obvious by Hayashi et al. (5,874,696) taken in view of Merkel (6,137,676). Claims 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13 are objected to as being "dependent upon a rejected base claim," but are indicated as being otherwise allowable.

Claim Amendment

By this Amendment, Applicant has canceled claims 1-4, thus obviating the outstanding prior art rejections.

On page 4 of the outstanding Office Action, the Examiner states:

Claims 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Applicant notes that claim 7 is, in fact, an independent claim, as clearly noted on page 3 of the Amendment submitted on July 25, 2003. It is also noted that claims 8, 10, 11 and 13 are all dependent from claim 7. Thus, Applicant submits that claims 7, 8, 10, 11 and 13 are presently in condition for allowance without further amendment.

It is noted that claims 14, 15 and 17-20 stand allowed.

Serial No. 10/001,789

Summary

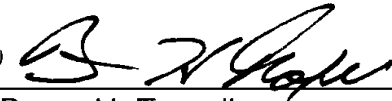
In view of the foregoing, Applicant submits that all of the remaining claims in this application are either allowed, or in condition for allowance and such action is respectfully requested.

Should any points remain in issue, which the Examiner feels could best be resolved by either a personal or a telephone interview, it is urged that Applicant's local attorney be contacted at the exchange listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

Date: January 12, 2004

By:



Bruce H. Troxell
Reg. No. 26,592

TROXELL LAW OFFICE PLLC
5205 Louisbourg Pike, Suite 1404
Falls Church, Virginia 22041
Telephone: 703 575-2711
Telefax: 703 575-2707